

Are North Carolinians freemen?

Are North Carolinians Freemen?

Read and Judge.

The following paragraph appeared in the North Carolina *Standard* of September 13, 1856. It is the conclusion of an article headed "Fremont in the South:"

"If there be Fremont men among us, let them be silenced or required to leave. *The expression of black Republican opinions in our midst, is incompatible with our honor and safety as a people.* If at all necessary, we shall refer to this matter again. Let our schools and seminaries of learning be scrutinized; and if black Republicans be found in them, let them be driven out. *That man is neither a fit nor a safe instructor of our young men, who even inclines to fremont and black Republicanism.*"

In the *Standard* of September 27th, a communication appeared over the signature "An Alumnus." The writer is generally supposed to be Mr .Jos. A. Englehardt, of Raleigh. He says that Yale and Harvard "have been turned from their legitimate channels, and been perverted into strongholds of fanaticism." He thinks the Trustees of Harvard have made themselves infamous by their treatment of Judge Loring, and asks the Trustees of the University of North Carolina, to go and do likewise. The following extract from Alumnus' article, explains itself:

"But the question occurs, are we entirely rid of Northern influence in the South? Can North Carolina tell the world that her seminaries of learning are free from the corrupting influences of black Republicanism, and Southererns can receive Southern education unmixed with instructions hostile to the feelings and opinions their parents have instilled into them? Nay, can the Trustees of our own State University invite pupils to the institution under their charge with the assurance that this main stream of education contains no deadly poison at its fountain head? Can boys be taken from Northern colleges and transferred to our University with perfect security?

"We have been led to these considerations, Messrs. Editors' by an article headed "Fremont in the South" in a late issue in the *Standard*, and more particularly the following closing paragraph:

"If there be Fremont men among us, let them be silenced or required to leave. *The expression of black Republican opinions in our midst is incompatible with our honor and safety as a people.* If at all necessary we shall refer to this matter 2 again. Let our schools and seminaries of learning be scrutinized; and if black Republicans be found in them let them be driven out. *That man is neither*

a fit nor a safe instructor for our young men, who even inclines to Fremont and black Republicanism.'
We were very much gratified to notice this article in your paper at this particular time; for we have been reliably informed that a professor at our State University is an open and avowed supporter of Fremont, and declares his willingness—nay, his desire—to support the black Republican ticket; and the want of a Fremont electoral ticket in North Carolina, is the only barrier to this *Southern* professor from carrying out his *patriotic* wishes. *Is he a fit or safe instructor for our young men?*

"If our information be entirely correct in regard to the political tendencies and Fremont bias of this professor, ought he not to be "required to leave," at least dismissed from a situation where his poisonous influence is so powerful, and his teachings so antagonistical to the "honor and safety" of the University and the State? Where is the creative power? To them we appeal. Have they no restrictive clause in the selection of instructors or limiting code in regard to their actions?

"If the Trustees or Faculty have no power in regard to the matter in question, we think it a fit object of early legislation, at the next meeting of our General Assembly. *This ought and must be looked to. We must have certain security, under existing relations of North with South, that at State Universities at least we will have no canker-worm preying at the very vitals of Southern institutions.*

"Upon what ground can a Southern instructor, relying for his support upon Southern money, selected to impart healthy instruction to the *sons of Southern slave owners*, and indebted for his situation to a Southern State, *excuse* his support of Fremont, with a platform which eschews the fathers of his pupils and the State from whose University he received his station, and from whose treasury he supports his family."

The occasion for this violent and fanatical assault was, that a Professor in the University had said in conversation with one of the students, that he would vote for Fremont, if an electoral ticket were formed. This statement was made early in August, and was generally known at that time among the students and people of Chapel Hill. But no one supposed that the Professor was thereby rendered unsafe as an instructor, or dangerous as a member of the community.

It was well known that the attacks of the *Standard* were directed against Mr. Hedrick. He, therefore, consulted his friends in regard to the course to be taken. One of the Professors advised him not to notice the attack "as Holden, 3 the editor, was such a liar, that no one would believe him. But another Professor, having returned from a visit to Hillsboro', said that the matter had already created quite a stir there, as several of the Trustees were denouncing Mr. Hedrick, calling him "an abolitionist," "a stirrer-up of the poor against the rich," etc., etc. To contradict these charges so far as

they were false, and to avow his true sentiments, Mr. Hedrick replied to the attacks of the *Standard*, in the following defense of himself and his opinions.

Professor Hedrick's Defense.

Messrs. Editors :—In the last *Standard*, I see a communication, signed “Alumnus.” Although my name is not mentioned therein, still I suppose there was little doubt that it was all intended for me. Now, politics not being my trade, I feel some hesitation in appearing before the public, especially at a time like this, when there seems to be a greater desire on the part of those who give direction to public opinion to stir up strife and hatred, than to cultivate feelings of respect and kindness. But, lest my silence might be misinterpreted, I will reply, as briefly as possible, to this, as it appears to me, uncalled for attack on my politics.

Then, to make the matter short, I say I am in favor of the election of Fremont to the Presidency; and these are my reasons for my preference:

1st. Because I like the man. He was born and educated at the South. He has lived at the North and the West, and therefore has had an opportunity of becoming acquainted with our whole people—an advantage not possessed by his competitors. He is known and honored both at home and abroad. He has shown his love of his country by unwavering devotion to its interests. And whether teaching school for the support of his widowed mother, or exploring the wilds of the great West; whether enlarging the boundaries of science or acquiring for our country the “golden State;” whether establishing a constitution for this youngest daughter of the Union, or occupying a seat in the Senate of the nation—in every position, and under all circumstances—whether demanding heroic daring or prudent council, he has always possessed the courage to undertake, and the wisdom to carry through. In reference to the value of his services in California, Mr. Buchanan says, “he bore a conspicuous part in the conquest of California, and in my opinion is better entitled to be called the conqueror of California than any other man.” For such services and such ability, I love to do him honor. “Platforms” and principles are good enough in their places; but for the Presidential chair, the first requisite is *a man*.

4

2d; Because Fremont is on the right side of the great question which now disturbs the public peace. Opposition to slavery extension is neither a Northern nor a sectional *ism*. It originated with the great Southern statesmen of the Revolution. Washington, Jefferson, Patrick Henry, Madison, and Randolph were all opposed to slavery in the abstract, and were all opposed to admitting it into new territory. One of the early acts of the patriots of the Revolution was to pass the ordinance of “87,” by which slavery was excluded from *all* the territories we then possessed. This was going farther than the

Republicans of the present day claim. Many of these great men were slaveholders; but they did not let self-interest blind them to the evils of the system. Jefferson says that slavery exerts an evil influence both upon the whites and the blacks; but he was opposed to the abolition policy, by which the slaves would be turned loose among the whites. In his autobiography he says: "Nothing is more certainly written in the book of fate, than that these people are to be free; nor is it less certain that the two races, equally free, can not live in the same government. Nature, habit, opinion, have drawn indelible lines between them." Among the evils which he says slavery brings upon the whites, is to make them tyrannical and idle. "With the morals of the people their industry also is destroyed. For in a warm climate no man will labor for himself who can make another labor for him. This is so true, that of the proprietors of slaves a very small proportion, indeed, are ever seen to labor." What was true in Jefferson's time is true now. I might go on and give "Alumnus" every week from now till the election, a column of good "black Republican" documents, all written by the most eminent Southern statesmen, beginning with Washington, and including nearly all of eminence for ability, virtue, and patriotism, and coming down to our own times. No longer ago than 1850, Henry Clay declared in the Senate—"I never can, and never will vote, and no earthly power ever will make me vote to spread slavery over territory where it does not exist." At the same time that Clay was opposed to slavery, he was, like Fremont, opposed to the least interference by the general government, with slavery in the States where it exists. Should there be any interference with subjects belonging to State policy, either by other States or by the federal government, no one will be more ready than myself, to defend the "good old North," my native State. But, with Washington, Jefferson, Franklin, Henry, Randolph, Clay, and Webster for political teachers, I *can not* believe that slavery is preferable to freedom, or that slavery extension is one of the constitutional rights of the South. If "Alumnus" thinks that Calhoun, or any other, was a wiser statesman or better Southerner than either Washington or Jefferson, he is welcome to his opinion. I shall not attempt to abridge his liberty in the least. But my own opinions I will have, whether he is willing to grant me that right of every freeman, or not. I believe that I have had quite as good an Opportunity as he has to form an opinion on the questions now to be settled. And when "Alumnus" talks of "driving me out" for sentiments once held by these great men, I can not help thinking that he is becoming rather fanatical.

For the information of "Alumnus," I will state that he has put himself to unnecessary trouble in blazoning this matter before the public. The whole subject belongs exclusively to the jurisdiction of the Trustees of the University. They are men of integrity and influence, and have at heart the best interests of the University. There is no difficulty in bringing this, or any other question relating to the Faculty or students, before them. "Alumnus" has also made another mistake, in supposing that the Faculty take upon themselves to influence the political opinions of the students. The students come to college generally, with their party politics already fixed; and it is exceedingly rare for them to change while here. It has, however, been often remarked, that a very violent partisan at college, is

pretty sure to “turn over” before he has left college long. I have been connected with our University, as student and Professor, for six years, and am free to say that I know of no institution, North or South, from which partisan politics and sectarian religion are so entirely excluded. And yet we are too often attacked by the bigots of both. For my own part, I do not know the politics of more than one in a hundred of the students, except as I might infer to which party they belonged, from a knowledge of the politics of their fathers. And they would not have known my own predilections in the present contest, had not one of their number asked me which of the candidates I preferred.

But, if “Alumnus” would understand the state of things here correctly, he had better make a visit to the University. He would find each member of the Faculty busy teaching in his own department, whether of science or literature; and that party politics is one of the branches which we leave the student to study at some other place and time. If “Alumnus” does conclude to visit us, there is another matter to which I might direct his attention. The two societies here, to the one or the other of which all the students belong, have each a very good library, and in those libraries are to be found the “complete works” of many of our great statesmen. ⁶ Now, for fear that the minds of the students may be “poisoned” by reading some of these staunch old patriots, would it not be well for “Alumnus” to exert himself, through the Legislature or otherwise, to “drive” them out of the libraries? It is true, the works of Calhoun are in the same case with those of Jefferson; but from appearances, the Virginian seems to be read pretty often, while the South-Carolinian maintains a posture of “masterly inactivity.” When I was a student in college, a few years ago, the young politicians used to debate in the “Halls” of the societies, the same questions which the old politicians were debating in the Halls of Congress. The side which opposed slavery in the abstract, generally had the books in their favor, and as the records of the societies will show, they had quite often “the best of the argument.” So that when Col. Fremont said that he was “opposed to slavery in the abstract, and upon principle, sustained and made habitual by long-settled convictions,” he but uttered the sentiments of four-fifths of the best Southern patriots from the Revolution down to the present day; and I may add, of the majority of the people among whom I was born and educated. Of my neighbors, friends, and kindred, nearly one-half have left the State since I was old enough to remember. Many is the time I have stood by the loaded emigrant wagon, and given the parting hand to those whose face I was never to look upon again. They were going to seek homes in the free West, knowing, as they did, that free and slave labor could not both exist and prosper in the same community. If any one thinks that I speak without knowledge, let him refer to the last census. He will there find, that in 1850, there were fifty-eight thousand native North Carolinians living in the free States of the West. Thirty-three thousand in Indiana alone. There were, at the same time, one hundred and eighty thousand Virginians living in the free States. Now, if these people were so much in love with the “institution,” why did they not remain where they could enjoy its blessings?

It is not, however, my object to attack the institution of slavery. But even the most zealous defender of the patriarchal institution can not shut his eyes against a few prominent facts. One is, that in nearly all the slave States there is a deficiency of labor. Since the abolition of the African slave trade there is no source for obtaining a supply, except from the natural increase. For this reason, among others, a gentleman of South Carolina, in an article published in DeBow's Review for August, 1856, advocates a dissolution of the Union in order that the African slave trade may be revived. From North Carolina and Virginia nearly the entire increase of the slave population, during the last 7 twenty years, has been sent off to the new States of the South-west. In my boyhood I lived on one of the great thoroughfares of travel, (near Lock's Bridge on the Yadkin River) and have seen as many as two thousand in a single day, going South, mostly in the hands of speculators. Now, the loss of these two thousand did the State a greater injury than would the shipping off of a million of dollars. I think I may ask any sensible man how we are to grow rich and prosper, while "driving out" a million of dollars per day. I am glad, however, to say that the ruinous policy is not now carried on to such an extent as it has been. But there is still too much of it. I have very little doubt that if the slaves which are now scattered thinly over Tennessee, Kentucky, and Missouri, were back in Virginia and North Carolina, it would be better for all concerned. These old States could then go on and develop the immense wealth which must remain locked up for many years to come. Whilst the new States, free from a system which degrades white labor, would become a land of Common Schools, thrift and industry, equal if not superior to any in the Union. But letting that be as it may, still no one can deny that here in North Carolina we need more men, rather than more land. Then why go to war to make more slave States, when we have too much territory already, for the force we have to work it? Our fathers fought for freedom, and one of the tyrannical acts which they threw in the teeth of Great Britain was that she forced slavery upon the Colonies against their will. Now, the secessionists are trying to dissolve the Union because they are not permitted to establish slavery in the Territory of Kansas. If the institution of slavery is a thing good and desirable in itself, it is the easiest thing in the world for the people to vote for its introduction at any time after they have formed a Constitution and been admitted as a State. If it is not a thing good and desirable, it would be an act of great oppression to force it upon them. For, however any one may lament the evils of slavery, it is almost impossible to get rid of the system when once introduced. Nullify it by law if you will, still the evil remains, perhaps aggravated. But in a new State a few words in the Constitution may prevent the entire evil from entering.

From my knowledge of the people of North Carolina, I believe that the majority of them who will go to Kansas during the next five years, would prefer that it should be a free State. I am sure that if I were to go there I should vote to exclude slavery. In doing so I believe that I should advance the best

interest of Kansas, and at the same time benefit North Carolina and Virginia, by preventing the carrying away of slaves who may be more profitably employed at home.

Born in the "good old North State," I cherish a love for her and her people that I bear to no other State or people. It will ever be my sincere wish to advance her interests. I love also the Union of the States, secured as it was by the blood and toil of *my* ancestors; and whatever influence I possess, though small it may be, shall be exerted for its preservation. I do not claim infallibility for my opinions. Wiser and better men have been mistaken. But holding as I do the doctrines once advocated by Washington and Jefferson, I think I should be met by argument and not by denunciation. At any rate, those who prefer to denounce me should at least support their charges by their own name.

B. S. Hedrick.

Chapel Hill, October 1, 1856.

Below is an extract from the address of the late Judge Gaston, before the two Literary Societies of the University of N. C. It shows what one of the best, truest, and greatest of North Carolina's sons thought of slavery. It may be well to remember that Judge Gaston was not expelled from the State for this address, but that may be owing to the fact that the pro-slavery fanatics were not then in power.

"As your country grows in years, you must also cause it to grow in science, literature, arts, and refinement. It will be for you to develop and multiply its resources, to check the faults of manners as they rise, and to advance the cause of industry, temperance, moderation, justice, morals, and religion, all around you. On you, too, will devolve the duty which has been too long neglected, but which can not with impunity be neglected much longer, of providing for the mitigation, and (is it too much to hope for in North Carolina?) for the ultimate extirpation of the worst evil that afflicts the Southern part of our Confederacy. Full well do you know to what I refer, for on this subject there is, with all of us, a morbid sensitiveness which gives warning even of an approach to it. Disguise the truth as we may, and throw the blame where we will, it is slavery which, more than any other cause, keeps us back in the career of improvement. It stifles industry and represses enterprise—it is fatal to economy and providence—it discourages skill—impairs our strength as a community, and poisons morals at the fountain head. How this evil is to be encountered, how subdued, is indeed a difficult and delicate inquiry, which this is not the time to examine, nor the occasion to discuss. I felt, however, that I could not discharge my duty, without referring to this subject, as one which ought to engage the prudence, moderation, and firmness of those who, sooner or later, must act decisively upon it."— *Gaston's Address*, page 20.